

Building a Culture of Liberty V: Agorism



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Building a Culture of Liberty I: Definitions

Building a Culture of Liberty II: Parenting

Building a Culture of Liberty III: Schooling

Building a Culture of Liberty IV: Radical Unschooling

“Agorism is a libertarian social philosophy that advocates creating a society in which all relations between people are voluntary exchanges by means of counter-economics, thus engaging in a manner with aspects of peaceful revolution.” So says Wikipedia. What is counter-economics? According to the father of Agorism, Samuel Konkin, “the study or practice of all peaceful human action which is forbidden by the State.” I think agorism is a much broader concept and practice than was ever suggested by Konkin, and a necessary foundation to building a culture of liberty.

Education

Josef Stalin, the anti-libertarian Russian despot said that “Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns, why should we let them have ideas?” Indeed. Ideas are a powerful thing. So much so that governments everywhere have set up schools and, with very few exceptions, require attendance. Today we see governments encouraging parents to send their little ones to school earlier and earlier. And what ideas are children taught in school? Along with everything I covered in Part III, they’re taught pro-government ideas, beginning with the coercively required recital every morning of the “Pledge of Allegiance” to the nation-state (at least in the US). When parents choose radical unschooling over government schools, they are entering the *agora* (Greek for “open space”) and providing a foundation of educational freedom and exploration, where no idea is prohibited, for their children. Some of the more dangerous ideas learned in the agora, like attachment parenting and radical unschooling, from the government’s point of view, are as follows.

Governance vs. the State

Once someone decides that they value liberty, they often begin studying liberty. For me, I began valuing liberty after I learned a bit of economics. Once I understood the disastrous effects of government interventions in the market, I wanted to know more about getting rid of those interventions, about increasing liberty. As I followed this path, it became clearer to me the nature of government, of the state. I've always valued and still value "governance", what Mark Bevir defines as "all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government [the state], market or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through laws, norms, power or language." So, isn't that the state? Not exactly.

The state is a non-contractual monopoly of governance (the legal use of force) within a defined territorial boundary. As it's non-contractual, it was founded and maintained on the basis of conquest, not consent. Therefore, the state is a violation of liberty. And every state, every government, that exists today was founded and is maintained in this same way. Once I discovered this, I began opposing the existence of the state because of the conflicts it presented to my values (consent, legitimacy, morality, liberty, peace). I became an anarchist, one who opposes the idea that some people may rule over others, that might makes right, that its morally or philosophically right to initiate coercion against the innocent.

State Law is Mere Risk

Once the state is understood, how should one view its laws? The agorist, understanding the illegitimate nature of the state, views its laws as a matter of risk. One is not honor-bound to obey illegitimate state law other than where its violation puts one's values at risk. The state is simply a larger and better organized criminal syndicate. We go about our lives mitigating such risks as natural disasters, accidents, and petty crime. State laws are merely one more type of risk to be mitigated. We pay our taxes not because paying taxes is the good and moral thing to do, but because if we don't, we risk being thrown in the rape factory that is prison, or worse. The less risky it is to violate a given state law, the agorist will do so without shame, all in the hope that the more this occurs the greater the chance the given law will be seen as obsolete and remain unenforced. The more laws that agorist activity can make obsolete, the better circumstances are for building a culture of liberty, which leads us to entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship

An entrepreneur is someone who operates a business, taking on greater than normal financial risk. In order to succeed, they must successfully anticipate consumer demand and offer the appropriately priced supply. This takes, among other things, creativity,

inventiveness, and foresight. It also takes capital and a willingness to jump through any number of legal hurdles, some areas more onerous than others. Entrepreneurs, in my opinion, are the heroes of the world. They've brought to the masses the printing press, the automobile, the computer, the Internet, and every other amazing thing we take for granted these days. In short, they make us more powerful, and often that power is great enough to increase our liberties. Entrepreneurs continue to make us more powerful and help us get what we want, and these days we see things like cryptocurrencies, decentralized web commerce, and encrypted peer-to-peer networks, each of which are making great strides in battling meddlesome government. The more entrepreneurial activity, the better, in my opinion. A relevant fact, a far higher percentage of radical unschoolers become entrepreneurs than their schooled or homeschooled counterparts.

Final Thoughts

Spreading libertarian ideas, making obsolete government laws, and building the products and services that will give greater and greater power to the masses is what agorism is all about. These things are what's keeping liberty alive today. If we ever want a free society, we must each find ways to contribute in these areas. Start by raising your children in liberty, in the agora. In the next and final part of this series, I'll explore how moral outrage is developed and why its necessary in building a culture of liberty.

Building a Culture of Liberty VI: Moral Outrage

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